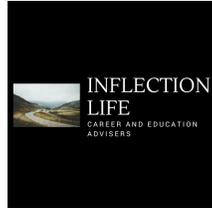

5 Keys to LLM Success



What does “Success” mean?

Each LLM student arrives at law school with a unique set of results they want to achieve at the end of their studies. Success means the achievement of these results. Keep in mind that desired results are different for everyone. Focus on your own definition of success.

1. Write down your goals and look at them daily

Think about what your long and short term goals are. Passing the New York bar exam? Obtaining a one year internship in the U.S.? Admission to an SJD program? Gaining a strong understanding of U.S. corporate law? Pick one or two and write them down. Start every day by looking at your goals.

2. Choose your LLM program wisely

One of the most important keys to success for an LLM student happens before you even arrive on campus. Each LLM program offers a different experience and law school or university rankings are only one small part of the picture. If you are not sure about the difference between the programs, [we can help](#). Talk to current and former LLM students at different schools. Most importantly, keep looking at your **goals** and ask how each aspect of the LLM programs will help you to achieve those goals.

3. Be Demanding

One of the worst kept secrets in international legal education is that law schools are not generally staffed to meet the needs of international LLM students. As a result, you will likely have to assert yourself to receive services to help reach your goal. This can be a



culture shock for students who may not be used to asserting themselves with those in “authority” such as school administrators. Always be polite, but do not be afraid to demand the services you need.

Look Beyond the International Programs Office

The good news is that international programs offices at law schools are generally staffed by dedicated and well meaning individuals who truly want what is best for you. The bad news is that they often do not have the expertise or influence with law school administration to get it for you.

Career Services

If you are looking for an internship or job in the US, the Career Services Office can help you, but will likely not be proactive in getting you the resources you need. Go to the office *as soon as you arrive on campus* and ask to speak to someone who is knowledgeable about the LLM job search. Tell this person your goals and ask for specific resources that will be helpful to you. These can include:

- Job postings open to LLM students
- Past employers that have hired LLM students
- Alumni you can connect with for networking purposes
- Sample US style resumes and cover letters specifically tailored for LLM students

4. Time is your biggest obstacle. Focus on things that matter.

As an LLM student you have one year of study plus (maybe) one year of OPT time. Using that time effectively will be the difference between whether or not you achieve your goals. Law school is filled with demands on your time. Your email will be constantly overflowing with things that “everyone” will say is so important. **Do not listen to them.** How do you decide what matters? Go back and look at your goals. If the opportunity with which you are presented does not match your goals, skip it. If you are unsure, ask for evidence that the proposed activity will lead to your goals.

Grades May Not Matter

It is natural to assume that the most important thing to focus on in school is your grades. Depending on your goals, you may be correct, especially if you are trying to transfer to a JD program or are looking for a job at a prestigious law firm. But, before you spend all your time focused on your studies, ask these questions:

- How are classes graded? Is there a separate LLM curve?
- Does your goal require strong LLM grades?



Improving English Can Open Doors

International LLM students are often the most experienced and engaged students in a US law school. And yet, [bias](#) against non-native speakers can be an obstacle to opportunity. Moreover, even native English speakers run into difficulty learning “Legal English.” Take every opportunity you can to improve speaking and, especially, writing skills. If your school offers optional legal english training, make sure to take advantage. If possible, find a tutor or coach to help guide you. Also, keep in mind that writing skills are much more important than speaking skills. You can have great success with intermediate speaking skills as long as your reading, writing, and listening skills are excellent.

Start Bar Preparations Immediately

If your goal is to get admitted to practice law in the US and take the New York Bar Exam (now UBE), understand that foreign educated attorneys have much lower pass rates than US-educated attorneys. As a result, you should begin preparing for the exam the moment you step foot on your US law school campus. Most, if not all of your LLM courses should be subjects that are tested on the bar exam. Speak with a bar exam expert immediately as well. If financially feasible, immediately contact a bar tutor that specializes in LLMs. New York also has a [significant number of requirements](#) for eligibility. The Credential Evaluation Service deadline is Oct. 1 for July Bar exam students. Make sure you start the process early and arrive in the US with copies of all the necessary credentials.

5. Start [Networking](#) Early

Possible networking targets include:

- LLM graduates from your law school (especially those from your home country)
- Graduates in other disciplines from your home country
- Bar Associations catering to attorneys from your home country (for example [The Nigerian Lawyers Association](#))
- Chambers of Commerce (for example the [USA-Cameroon Chamber of Commerce](#))
- University organizations catering to students from your home country (for example the [Chinese Students Club](#) at Columbia)
- Contacts at previous employers from your home country.
- Law firms in the US that do business in your home country (for example the [India Practice Group](#) at Bryan Cave)

If you'd like a **personalized plan** for how to use law school to achieve success, please take a look at our full list of services on our [website](#).